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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000274

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: BAGHDAD PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: THE HEAVY HAND OF  
SECTARIANISM

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) A  
ND (D).

11. (C) Summary: In the year since the January 2005 elections, the Baghdad Provincial Council (BPC) has fired officials, dissolved councils, seized offices by force, and ignored entire sectors of the province. Sunnis are not represented on the BPC, which is dominated by Sadr City and/or SCIRI representatives. Council composition reflects the framework in effect during the January 2005 elections, which did not provide for broad provincial representation. SEPTTEL will provide post's views on how the framework for the upcoming provincial elections could encourage a less sectarian/exclusionary outcome. END SUMMARY

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The Problem is Representation  
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12. (C) In the January 2005 elections, candidates from Sadr City won 28 of a total of 51 available BPC seats. The SCIRI Party, with additional members from other districts, emerged as the dominant force in the BPC. This allowed the SCIRI Party and Sadr City politicians to virtually control all aspects of the council and provincial government.

13. (C) As members of the council became familiar with their positions and council responsibilities, they developed the perspective that the BPC was elected by the people and was consequently a more legitimate democratic organization than all other agencies and councils. Therefore other agencies and councils could be ignored -- including the regional, district and neighborhood councils appointed under the CPA.

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Government of, for, and by the Council  
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14. (C) Prior to the spring of 2005, the Baghdad City Council (BCC) ran the city of Baghdad, while a regional advisory council (RAC) represented the Qadas (districts) outside of the city. In April of 2005, the BPC "dissolved" the BCC (reftel) charging the city council members with corruption and incompetence. The BCC took the BPC to the Iraqi Administrative Courts where the case is awaiting a decision.

15. (C) Following its move against the BCC, the BPC took aim at the Mayor of Baghdad, Dr. Alaa Al-Tamimi, who had been initially appointed under CPA. Dr. Alaa had previously refused to accept the authority of the BCC over his office, arguing that the Mayor of Baghdad's Office was considered a ministerial position and not subject to BCC oversight.

After the BCC was dissolved, the BPC began putting pressure on the mayor to start reporting to the provincial council. Just as he had with the BCC, the mayor bristled at the thought of reporting to the provincial council. The BPC fired the mayor in August of 2005 (reftel), accusing him of corruption and incompetence. The mayor refused to step down and on August 8 the Governor, Hussein Mohammed Ali al-Tahan, walked into the Amanat and seized the mayor's office with guns drawn. The Governor occupied the office for about 45 days until the BPC appointed a new mayor -- Dr. Saber Al-Esawi, a member of the BPC and the SCIRI Party. The council, in one fell swoop, now had control of the city administration and the budget.

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Reaching Beyond the City  
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¶6. (C) Having dissolved the Baghdad City Council and fired the Mayor, the BPC and SCIRI Party then looked to take control of the Qadas outside of the city. In August they dismissed the Deputy Governor of the BPC, Zaid Tarak Ahmed al-Zawbairi (reftel) -- a Sunni Arab, who had been chosen by the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) -- in favor of a SCIRI member. (NOTE: Under Provincial Council and RAC rules, the RAC was allowed to choose an individual to fill the position of Deputy Governor.) Following this action, there have been no Sunni Arabs on the Baghdad Provincial Council.

¶7. (C) The BPC's push to consolidate and extend its power has not abated. In December a special council meeting was

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called to elect a BPC Chairman. Mazin Makia had been the chairman since the council was seated in February 2005, but Mazin was neither from Sadr City nor a SCIRI Party member. Mazin was defeated, and Mu'een Hameed, a BPC council member from Sadr City and a member of the SCIRI Party, was elected the new chairman. Mu'een received 28 of 51 votes.

¶8. (C) In January 2006, the BPC Security Council accused the Baghdad City Chief of Police, General Abdul Rezak, of incompetence and failure to report to the BPC. The General was fired, but is appealing his case with the BPC. According to Governor Al-Tahan, either the Governor, who is a SCIRI Party member, or another SCIRI candidate will be appointed the new Chief of Police.

¶9. (C) Since February 2005 the BPC has repeatedly told all other councils in Baghdad that the BPC is the only legitimate, legal, and democratic council in the province. The Provincial Support Team within the Embassy has advised the council to soften this position, but with limited success. The BPC continues to bully the regional and district councils. The provincial council recently created a Regional Council Committee to advise the provincial council on the issues and needs of the outlying districts, or Qadas, in the province. This was the role previously accomplished by the Regional Advisory Council. The outlying Qadas are also largely Sunni.

This would appear to be a measure to replace the RAC which has a large Sunni membership.

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COMMENT  
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¶10. (C) Results from the January 2005 Elections were based on popular vote without provision for broad provincial representation. This formula -- along with low Sunni Arab participation in the January 2005 election -- created the atmosphere that currently

prevails in the BPC: entire districts and Qadas without representation and no Sunnis in the government. The BPC ignores the voice of entire districts and actively seeks to remove Sunnis in any governmental position where a SCIRI Party member can be appointed. We can expect this pattern to continue if the framework for upcoming provincial council elections does not foster broad representation from within each province. SEPTTEL will provide post's views on how the framework for the upcoming provincial elections could encourage a less sectarian/exclusionary outcome. END COMMENT.  
KHALILZAD